

## June 15, 2006 - Democracy Denied: R's Eliminate Real Discussion and Amendment from Iraq "Debate"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 15, 2006

Democracy Denied:  
Republicans Eliminate Real Discussion and Amendment from Iraq "Debate"  
R's Show Today Is About Politics, not Progress

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today led Democrats in opposing the rule governing debate and amendment on H.R. 861, the Iraq war resolution being considered by the House today.

Though they claimed that the day would feature a sincere and open debate about the Iraq war, Republicans in the Rules Committee passed a closed rule last night which limited the number of Members who would have the chance to speak on H.R. 861, and which prevented any Member of the House from presenting an amendment to the bill.

To view a video of Rep. Slaughter's address, [click here](#).

"What this Republican Leadership is giving us is a day not about policy or progress, but about politics and posturing,"

Rep. Slaughter said.

"It is a day designed to provide the Majority with a chance to make cheap political attacks against Democrats in anticipation of the upcoming mid-term elections at a time when Americans and Iraqis are giving their lives in the one of the most brutal wars of our time."

"My fellow Democrats and I have said a lot about the death of democracy in this House," she said. "Over the course of the 109th Congress - out of 144 different Rules presented by this Republicans - only one rule which wasn't an appropriations measure has been made open for debate and amendment by this Leadership."

"Well, if there was ever a rule that should be open - if there was ever a day on which democracy should breathe freely in these halls, even if just for one day - then it is this rule, and it should be this day."

"Whether you are a Democrat or Republican, your vote on this rule isn't about how you voted on the war," Rep. Slaughter continued. "It is about respecting the troops. It is about respecting democracy. How can we ask the young men and women of our armed forces to die so that Iraqis can have democracy and debate when we are systematically undermining those same principals here in the United States Congress? It is unconscionable."

"By supporting this rule, what you are saying is that this war is just a political tool to be used to win elections," Rep. Slaughter said.

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's remarks, as prepared, can be found below:

M. Speaker,

In 1991, leading up to the first Gulf War, this Congress had a real debate about that conflict, because in 1991, this House was a real deliberative body.

We had three resolutions to consider - it was actually a Minority resolution that passed. And every Member who wanted it had five minutes to speak their mind.

Contrast that with what this Republican Leadership is giving us now: a day not about policy or progress, but about politics and posturing.

It is a day designed to provide the Majority with a chance to make cheap political attacks against Democrats in anticipation of the upcoming mid-term elections at a time when Americans and Iraqis are giving their lives in the one of the most brutal wars of our time.

Yesterday, an internal Republican memo was circulated outlining the Party's plan of attack for today. It instructs Republicans to paint a picture of, quote, "a Democrat Party without a coherent national security policy that sheepishly dismissed the challenges America faces in a post-9/11 world," end quote. We'll hear a lot of that empty propaganda today, I'm sure.

How will such divisive rhetoric help our soldiers abroad, M. Speaker? What could it possibly have to do with the war we are fighting?

And if this memo didn't show us the real Republican motivations behind today, last night's meeting of the Rules Committee surely did.

My fellow Democrats and I had a simple request at that meeting. We asked for the rule before us to be an open one. An open rule would have given any Member who wanted to speak the chance to do so.

And what's more, an open rule would have permitted Members from both parties to present amendments to this resolution, so that we could do more than just talk, so that we could try to improve flawed policies being pursued in Iraq.

But the Committee gave us a closed rule. Not one person here, from either party, will be able to amend this legislation.

Why would Republicans do this? Could it be because they aren't interested in addressing a serious question in a forthright way?

There surely are problems to be addressed. To give just one example:

Yesterday, I was joined by a group of Democrats repeating our call for the creation of a Truman Commission to oversee the Iraqi reconstruction.

Rampant corruption and incompetence in Iraq contracting have prolonged our mission there and cost lives. 75 percent of oil and gas and 50 percent of electricity projects remaining unfinished. The GAO reports 7 billion dollars in funds have simply been lost. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Stuart Bowen, is investigating 72 cases of alleged fraud.

Have Republicans dealt with these problems? They have not. Instead, they recently elected to block 1.9 billion dollars in new reconstruction funds from being examined by Mr. Bowen and his team. Apparently, he was doing his job too well.

So I suppose it shouldn't come as a surprise that today, instead of proposing serious solutions to the problems we are facing in Iraq, Republicans are offering us a "yes" or "no" vote on a resolution drowning in patriotic rhetoric and offering us an open-ended fight against an open-ended enemy.

Debate is about choice - but there is no choice here today. What we have is less like our democracy and more like a Soviet election.

Americans expect real debate in their Congress. They don't expect their Representatives to passively acquiesce to the assertions of a meaningless resolution based on White House talking points. And they expect their elected officials to have a meaningful discussion on the future course of the greatest challenge to our nation in a generation.

My friends on both sides of the aisle: we can stop this sham in its tracks by voting no on this rule.

I implore every Member, from both parties, to realize what is at stake here:

If you support this rule, then you are saying you don't believe our troops and their families deserve a serious debate on this war. You are saying you don't think the massive troubles of the Iraqi people deserve more than a cursory glance. And you are saying you don't think this Congress should be anything more than the President's rubber stamp.

What you are saying is that this war is just a political tool to be used to win elections.

My fellow Democrats and I have said a lot about the death of democracy in this House. Over the course of the 109th Congress - out of 144 different Rules presented by this Republicans - only one rule which wasn't an appropriations measure has been made open for debate and amendment by this Leadership. One.

Well, if there was ever a rule that should be open - if there was ever a day on which democracy should breathe freely in these halls, even if just for one day - then it is this rule, and it should be this day.

Your vote on this rule isn't about how you voted on the war. It is about respecting the troops. It is about respecting democracy.

How can we ask the young men and women of our armed forces to die so that Iraqis can have democracy and debate when we are systematically undermining those same principals here in the United States Congress? It is unconscionable.

Whether you are a Democrat or Republican, I implore every Member here to take a stand for the values of democracy and the values of this nation and vote against this rule.

Defeating this rule will show our troops that we have enough respect for them in this House to have a real debate on their future, and on the future of this nation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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